6.

Conſiderations

Offered to all the

CORPORATIONS

OF

ENGLAND,

Well worth their

OBSERVATION,

Containing ſeaſonable advice to them in their future Elections

OF

BURGESSES

To Serve in

PARLIAMENT;

Merely in Relation to, and ſo far forth only, as ſuch Elections affect Trade, and are, as will appear hereby, the main cauſe of its preſent great decay.

LONDON,

Printed for *William Cademan*, at the Sign of the *Popes*-Head, in the New-Exchange in the *Strand*, 1681.

Considerations

CORPORATIONS

OF

ENGLAND,

With some short

OBSERVATIONS

On the

BURGESSES

To Serve in

PARLIAMENT.

In Relation to, and so far forth only, as
their Elections affect Trade, and are, as will ap-
pear hereby, the main cause of its present great

LONDON,

Printed for William Cadogan, at the Sign of the
Three-Pens-Head, in the New-Exchange in the
Strand. 1695.

CONSIDERATIONS

Offered to all the

CORPORATIONS

OF

ENGLAND,

Well worth their Obſervation, containing ſeaſonable Advice to them in their future Elections of BURGESSES *to ſerve in* PARLIAMENT, *merely in relation to, and ſo far forth only, as ſuch Elections affect Trade, and are, as will appear hereby, the main Cauſe of its preſent Decay.*

EXperience does ſufficiently aſſure every Trading-man in this Kingdom, that there is a great and general decay of Trade, but the true Reaſon of this decay is known to few; and they very likely who do perceive it, having little or no Intereſt by it, are little or not all concerned to remedy it; divers cauſes are aſſigned by divers men, according to their different Intereſt and Principles; the Divine charges it upon the ſinful lives of men, for which God has brought this, and threatens other yet ſeverer Judgments, and he is not altogether miſtaken, it being on all hands conſeſt, that for the ſins of a Nation are Gods Judgments upon it, but as the deſign of theſe ſheets is to enquire into ſecond and cauſes merely humane, I ſhall paſs over this firſt, with this Obſervation only, that if that were the only reaſon, as the ſins of the Nation are general, and common to all Orders and Degrees of men, the Judgments for thoſe ſins would be ſo too; but here is a heavier Portion upon one part of the land then upon the reſt, and they who are moſt afflicted, are not perhaps the greateſt Offenders.

To keep therefore within my bounds and to my firſt purpoſe of humane cauſes; that your factious Schiſmaticks (thoſe Enemies of God and the King) who hate and miſlike the Government only becauſe they have no ſhare in it, (and who fearing the pretence of Religion too ſtale a cheat, are glad to lay hold on any) are they who moſt cry out for the decay of Trade, tho they have leaſt reaſon ſo to do, ſince I ſhall make it appear anon they are the main cauſe of it, is viſible to all men, theſe impute that decay to the miſcarriages in Government; and whilſt their reſtleſs Spirits (which ſtill long for the Fleſh-pots of their old Egypt in which the true *Iſrael* was by them enſlaved) are afraid too openly to declare againſt the Government, they do the utmoſt to undermine what they dare not directly aſſault, in commending, and ſlily inſinuating the good daies of the late times, the Plenty, Power, Riches and Reputation of their dear Commonwealth; Thus labouring to create ſome diſturbance, that in the troubled waters they may fiſh for themſelves, and catch once more ſome ſhare in the Government which God and Nature have not formed, the King called, nor their own Abilities qualified them for.

I come now to the true Cauſe, which as I have already ſaid, is cheifly in and from them who moſt complain; If Trade have not run in its old current; if Manufactors of all ſorts are brought ſo low, that Workmen can ſcarce be paid ſo as to live, and their Maſters get bread at the ſame time; If through this abatement of the value of Manufactures, men are ſo far diſcouraged from making them, that thouſands of men are thereby without employ; Men become averſe to the breading up their Children to Trades, by which they are not likely to get a Livelyhood, and Tradeſmen as backward in taking Youth into their ſervice, when they have not a Proſpect of work enough to anſwer the charges of their Servants and their own Pains; the great reaſon of all this decay is, that Trade is not in that eſteem it was formerly, and the cauſe of the decreaſe of that eſteam is plain, becauſe it has not of late years had the advantages and encouragements it once had, and which without doubt by the Laws and Conſtitutions of the Kingdom it ought ſtill to have.

Theſe diſcourages and diſadvantages of Trade, the true cauſes of its decay, are no leſs truly the effects of the undue Elections of Members to ſerve in Parliament, in which theſe ill affected Gentlemen have for theſe laſt fifty years, had a far greater Intereſt than the reſt of men who had voices in Elections; I call the Elections undue, becauſe I find them directly againſt the plain words and ſenſe of ſuch Statutes as direct Elections.

'Tis well known of late years, the houſe of Commons has been filled with Gentlemen, whoſe Ignorance of, and unconcern for Trade, has by degrees brought it to the condition it is now in; and the end I propoſe to my ſelf in this, is to convince all Corporations, that it is their duty and intereſt in the elections hereafter, to chooſe ſuch men, who live and ſubſiſt by Trade, and whoſe intereſts are of neceſſity to riſe and fall as that does; that it is their duty will appear from the Acts of Parliament, and that it is their intereſt alſo, will I hope be made pretty plain from what I ſhall hereafter ſet down.

There are ſeveral Statutes concerning Elections, as you will find them ſet down in the Margent, the firſt of theſe directs the time and manner of giving notice in the County of an Election to be; the ſecond confirms the firſt, Fines the Sheriff who ſhall Act contrary to it in one hundred pounds; the third I ſhall ſpeak of laſt; the fourth appoints every Knight of the Shire that ſhall be choſen to have forty ſhilling a year at leaſt of freehold in the County where he ſhall be choſen, and to be reſident and dwelling in the ſame County; the fift obliges every man who ſhall have a voice in the election of a Knight of the Shire, to have likewiſe forty ſhillings a year, and to be dwelling in the ſame County; the ſixth provides againſt falſe returns, and appoints Penalties on the Sheriffs in that caſe: The third which is moſt to the preſent purpoſe, confirming former Statutes, appoints what men ſhall be choſen Burgeſſes, and how qualified for the Election, which being ſo material and neceſſary for all men to know, I have thought good to ſet it down in its own words, the rather for that it is very ſhort.

7 *H.* 4. Ch. 15. 11 *H.* 4. Ch. 1. 1 *H.* 5. Ch. 1. 8 *H.* 6. Ch. 7. 10. *H.* 6. Ch. 2. 23 *H.* 6. Ch. 15.

1 *H.* 5. Ch. 1. Firſt that the Statutes of the Election of Knights of the Shires to come to the Parliament, be holden and kept in all points, adjoyning to the ſame, that the Knights of the Shires, which from henceforth ſhall be choſen in every Shire, be not choſen, unleſs they be reſident within the Shire where they ſhall be choſen, the day of the date of the Writ of the Summons of the Parliament: And that the Knights and Eſquires, and other which ſhall be Chooſers of thoſe Knights of the Shires, be alſo reſident within the ſame Shires in manner and form as is aforeſaid: and moreover it is Ordained and Eſtabliſh'd, that the Citizens and Burgeſſes of the Cities and Boroughs, be choſen Men Citizens and Bugeſſes reſident dwelling and Free in the ſame Cities and Boroughs, and no other in any wiſe.

Thus far the Statute which is very ſhort and very plain: Here the King with his

his Parliament obſerving how at their time Gentlemen Freeholders were ſometimes returned for Boroughs, who had Intereſts of their own to manage, and theſe being oppoſite to thoſe of Tradeſmen, whoſe Burgeſſes they were, they were not like to favour theſe againſt themſelves, nor to take that care of Trade as was requiſite for the publick good, of which, and of the ways and means of improving it, they were wholly Ignorant.

Theſe things conſidered by King and Parliament, to prevent the growing miſcheif, they did very ſeaſonably apply that early remedy of this act of Parliament, obliging thereby Corporations to chooſe Repreſentatives among themſelves of their own Cities and Boroughs, inhabiting and dwelling among them, and ſure this was done with as great Wiſdom as Juſtice; for ſince the deſign of Burgeſſes from every Corporation was (and ſtill is) that each City and Borough might have ſome body on their behalfs preſent in Parliament, well verſed in their ways and means of dealing, beſt acquainted with their Greivances, and conſequently beſt able to repreſent them; that ſo through the endeavours of every Burgeſes in particular, the Miſchiefs and Greivances of every part being made known, by thoſe who beſt knew them, the whole Nation might be preſerved and its Intreſts advanced; I do not ſee nor can conceive how any man can be preſumed better qualifyed to anſwer theſe ends, than ſuch men as the Statute directs, *viz.* Citizens and Burgeſſes reſident, dwelling and Free in the ſame Cities and Boroughs and in no other wiſe; and ſure for any number of men in any Corporation to ſet up a ſtranger for the Election, is a bold liberty they aſſume to themſelves of diſpenſing with Acts of Parliament, and that in a matter of the higheſt nature and conſequence imaginable; it is impoſing their ſenſe upon the Nation, and preferring their own private opinion to the Supream Wiſdom and Judgment of the Kingdom, the King and his two Houſes; and this I think is ſufficient to ſhew them their plain, eaſie and neceſſary duty in Elections. I come now to ſhew that it is their Intereſt alſo; where it might be enough to tell them that the ſame reaſons which induced at firſt the making that Act of Parliament, do at this day oblige in point of intereſt all men to the juſt execution of it: It is a known rule, *ceſſante cauſa ceſſat effectus*; ſo *vice verſa*, ſhould the ſame cauſes continuing be attended with the like effects; and indeed I ſhould be glad that any man would ſhew me, how according to this Statute moſt of our late Elections be made out: how by your Statute is a Gentleman of the Temple a fit Member for *Worceſter* or *Taunton*? or how a very worthy Knight reſident and dwelling in *Southampton* Square (tho otherwiſe of very great abilities) ſufficiently qualified for a Burgeſs of *Plymouth*? how theſe Gentlemen I ſay (tho never ſo learned in all other things) can be ſuppoſed to underſtand pefectly the particular Intereſt of Cities and Towns, in which perhaps they nere ſet foot but at Elections? or what reaſon Tradeſmen have to hope or promiſe themſelves, that Strangers (being Gentlemen, whoſe Intereſts if they run not directly counter to, are yet very different from theirs who chooſe them) ſhould be more concerned for their good (tho in oppoſition to their own,) than men of their own body, obliged by the ſame Intereſts, and therefore moved by the ſame conſiderations, is not within my underſtanding: The miſchiefs and evils in the Body Politick do thus far reſemble the natural body, that to know and well underſtand the diſtemper is a good ſtep to the cure of it, this is by all men allowed; ſo likewiſe that the knowledge a Phyſician has of the conſtitution of a body with reaſon prefers him to abler means in the cure, as moſt likely to remove the evil, common experience demonſtrates daily: This might be ſufficient to ſhew that tis the intereſt of Tradeſmen, to ſend Members choſen out of themſelves; yet to make this more plain, to matter of Reaſon I will add matter of Fact, and ſhew them how by neglect of this duty in their Elections they have already actually received much damage.

1. What has the Houſe of Commons, being full of Gentlemen, done, as for inſtance (not to run back into times, which it were to be wiſht were as abſolutly forgot as the Guilt of them is forgiven) in 1660? It was neceſſary to improve the revenue of the Crown, they did it by eaſing themſelves and laying the burthen upon the Trading part of the people.

The Court of Wards and Liveries, Tenures in Capite and by Knights ſervice, were one of the goodlieſt Jewels in the Crown, a high and vaſt Prerogative it was, and ſuch a one, by means whereof the Kings of *England* had a ſtrange hand over all the Gentry, by the great Intereſt they had in all their houſes as well over the perſons of their Children as their Eſtates; yet this Prerogative extended but to them, Tradeſmen were not at all concerned, this therefore they thought fit to remove, but that the Crown might be no loſer (as there was no reaſon it ſhould) ſomething was to be found out *equivalent*, the Exciſe, which juſt before had been given for the Kings Life, was thought fitteſt, and was accordingly ſettled upon the Crown in Fee.

12. Ca. 2di. *Ch.* 24.

II. The taking away theſe Courts has been as Prejudicial to the Yeomanry, as it has been uſeful to the Gentry, who before, of Intereſt were obliged to make their Farms leſs, and to let long Leaſes at reaſonable Rates; but now they erect great Farms which few are able to Rent, and Rack the poor Tenants.

III. All the Aſſeſſments and Revenues of the Crown, are cheifly paid by the middle ſort of People, as Tenths and firſt Fruits from the Clergy, Cuſtoms by Merchants, Exciſe by Brewers, Chimney-mony by Tenants, Freeholders paying nothing certain to the Crown, which is a great diſadvantage to the Trading People; that Freeholders are not obliged to ſome Proportion, at leaſt in payments with them.

IV. Upon a Preſumption of raiſing the Product of *England*, many Laws have been neglected, which would be highly for the intereſt of the Trading ſort of People, and ſome Laws have been made directly contrary to their Intereſt, which is no wonder, when amongſt the Law-givers there are ſo few (if any) that either underſtand what may prejudice or advance Trade, or if they do, through ſelf Intereſt, Politickly diſſemble that Knowledge, of this ſort are all thoſe Laws which give leave for the Exportation of the growth of *England* without Manufacturing: Secondly moſt of thoſe Laws prohibit the growth of other Countries, which if Trading were free, we might with great advantage purchaſe with our own Manufactures, of this kind there is a very late one, the Iriſh Bill, which enriching only a few in the Weſt of *England*, is out of every houſe-keepers way in *London*, and moſt Counties, twenty ſhillings a year for every perſon in his Family, beſides the diſadvantage of our Artificers in Exchange of Manufacture, and our Iriſh Merchant in Exchange of Mony.

Before I paſs further, I muſt needs here mention one great damage the Crown it ſelf ſuſtains by this Bill; for the Victualing the Navy ſtands his Majeſty each pound of Beef once as much again as his Neighbours the French and Dutch, to whom the Iriſh (being forbidden *England*) are forced to ſell their Cattle at a very low rate; thus the King loſes, the City loſes, all *Ireland* or a good part of it ſuffers, when beſides the French and Dutch, a few Weſt Country Gentlemen and their Tenants only gain by it.

V. There are many Laws which would be of very great uſe for the Publick Intereſt, which upon the ſame account are neglected and laid aſide; as firſt the moſt excellent Statute of the fifth of the Queen, *Ch.* 5. The very title of which were ſufficient to recommend it, it is an Act touching politick Conſtitutions for the maintenance of the Navy; in this Statute amongſt other things, that great and wiſe Princeſs, and as true a Proteſtant as the beſt of them that diſtinguiſh themſelves by the Name, makes ſeveral Proviſions for the encreaſe of Shipping, and Saylers, appointing them certain Fiſh days, by which means they might be encouraged through the certainty of a Market for Fiſh, to build Veſſels, bring up and employ Seamen, and for want of which, thoſe few that do now uſe Fiſhing, carry it into other Countries, where they are ſure of a Market, ſo that we find by Experience that Fiſh is cheaper in other Countries of *Europe*, than it is here in *England*, though that Fiſh be taken upon our Coaſt and by our Country-men. Secondly Fleſh would be at a more reaſonable rate, if that Prodigious quantity were not each day devoured, and for which we are look'd upon as ſuch Gluttons by the world

world, even to become a by-word among the Nations, for who has not heard it ſaid that *London* muſt needs be a ſtrange Beaſt, that in ſix Months conſumes more fleſh than all *Spain* in ſeven years, and this was another end of that Statute.

VI. The Laws ought to be revived which preſerves the Property of the Trading Corporation, and thoſe which regard Aliens, not that at this time, when the Wiſdom of King and Council think fit in ſo extraordinary an occaſion to receive and encourage them to uſe their Trades, I preſume to offer any thing further than that the Statute, whereby they cannot work, but as retained by Engliſh, nor take other Apprentices than Engliſh, ſaving their own Children, be at that time look'd well after; for that by ſuch means, theſe Aliens might freely Trade, and the Profit be ſhared between them and the Engliſh.

7. The Laws againſt Hawkers ought to be revived, by whom great abuſes are committed; Wares are ill made and Trade brought low, all which matters now ſo heavy on Tradeſmen would be remedied, if ſo in their Elections they perſued the Act of Parliament, and made choiſe of ſuch men as were ſenſible of ſuch greivances, and were obliged as well of Intereſt as in Juſtice to redreſs them.

There are likewiſe many things very advantageous and beneficial that might be paſt into Laws, if ſuch Elections were,

1. As firſt, that Freeholders ſhould conſtantly bear an equal ſhare in Payments to the Crown with the Trading People; that would Enable the King to force a Trade abroad, and encourage Manufactures at home.

2. That a Regiſter might be Eſtabliſh'd to prevent Cheats, which fall moſt on Tradeſmen, and the many trivial Suits in Law, upon ſeveral and inconſiderable accounts; a Bleſſing not to be hoped for as long as Lawyers fill the Houſe.

3. That all Linnen cloth under the value of 3 *s.* an Ell might be prohibited, and a valuable Tax ſet upon our own Manufactured Cloth, to make up the loſs the Crown will receive by that Prohibition: This would employ a Million of People, and if the Work were carried on by a publick Stock, it would in three years time abate as much in the Poors Book, as the firſt advanced Stock would amount to.

4. That many Perſons having little or no Eſtate, (who live at a rate much above their Ranks and Fortunes, whereby the Tradeſmen of whom they take up muſt needs be loſers) may be obliged to take to ſome honeſt Employment.

5. That mony lent upon Land-ſecurity, ſhould not receive above 4*l.* 10*s.* *per Cent.* and mony upon Perſonal-ſecurity, be at 8*l.* *per Cent.* The preſent equality of Intereſt mony, without reſpect to the difference of the ſecurity, having this diſadvantage, that 6*l.* *per Cent.* being more profitable than the Land it ſelf at 20. years Purchaſe, men chooſe rather to lend upon Land, than Purchaſe it; hence ariſe Mortgages, whereby ſo many have been cheated; where if this remedy were had, men would chooſe to buy outright, and Fraud prevented.

From theſe Conſiderations I preſume it is by this time pretty plain, that it is the Intereſt of all the Corporations in *England*, to make choice in their Elections hereafter, of Tradeſmen of their own reſpective Corporations; it being as abſurd as injurious to truſt all the Trade of *England*, in the hands of men, who neither truly underſtand it, nor are concerned to improve and advance it, it being clearly the Intereſt of Freeholders, that the number of Tradeſmen increaſe, though not their Fortunes, that Tradeſmen be many and poor.

There is no doubt but after the making of the Statute of *H.* 5*th.* Citizens and Tradeſmen were returned to ſerve in Parliament; and 'tis very clear that the reaſon why that Cuſtom has been diſcontinued, was by reaſon of the charges each City and Borough was at in paying their Members, which made them give ear to thoſe who voluntarily profered their ſervice, tho they have dearly paid for it ſince: ſurely there is ſcarce any Corporation ſo poor, but amongſt them may be found two men of ſuch Fortunes as does enable them to bear the expence of that ſervice, tho otherwiſe the paying of Members is by far the leſs evil, conſidering what burthens have been laid upon them by a houſe of Commons made up of Gentlemen and Lawyers.

The greatest Strengh and Riches of *England*, were formerly in the hands of the middle sort of People, and is not yet so far Alienated, but that it may be retrieved, if care be taken to make due Elections; without which the wealth of the Nation will quickly be engrossed into a few hands, and what ways or means men then shall have to raise their Forunes by Diligence and Industry, every ordinary Judgement can satisfie it self.

From these late Elections it has followed, that the Interests of Corporations have been neglected, their greivances unregarded, whilst so many learned Gentlemen, have thought every thing less than the whole Kingdom at a lump, too mean for their Consideration.

The bare name of a States-man, or Stickler, has of late prefer'd many men to Elections, and they have held themselves obliged to make good the opinion their Electors had entertained of them; so that one may say every single Burgess has of late, been not so much the Representative of a Corporation, as of the whole Kingdom.

The Reason men give to excuse the great neglect of the Interest of Corporations is very plausible; Corporations, say they, are but little Members of the body politick, of which the State is the head; if that be diseased and its humours not purged, the several Members will be affected, and that I allow; But whether the ways and measures lately persued with so much zeal and passion, be the propereſt means to purge what ill humours are in the head, so as to restore health and vigour to every Member, is a Question. May we not reasonably think, that if every Member would study the particular advantages of that County, City, Borough, he serves for, make it his business to enquire well into their Interests, and represent their real greivances, and each in their turns get the concurrence of the whole house to the remedying thereof; may we not think, I say, that this way of curing and comforting every Member severally (which would produce in the end, ease and safety to all) might do the business every whit as well? yet this is not to be expected, whilst by a monstrous mistrust of the honesty or ability of own our fellow Citizens, (not like *London*, who has wisely at all times preserved that great and important right of sending Members of her own) we accept of Gentlemen, whom (if but for their eager desire of the employment, being Strangers to us) we might very reasonably suspect to have some other and further ends and designs by the Election, than our Interests and concerns; For I cannot be brought to believe, that a Gentleman, one whom I have never obliged, of different Interests from me, will spend a thousand pounds to carry an Election, merely to serve mine: How unlikely this is, and unreasonable soever it be to beleive it, yet we swallow the Pill, and are as fond of choosing them, as they are glad to be chosen; Thus whilst we cry out Liberty and Property, full of needless and imaginary fears and apprehensions from higher Powers, we our selves are the greatest betrayers of our Rights and Liberties, whilst we rashly and unadvisedly, trust them and our Religion in the hands of men, whose Principles in Religion, Maxims of State, secret grudges and distasts at the Government upon private accounts, we as little understand as they do our true Interests.

And now whilst we may Lawfully do our selves Justice, to neglect it, and promise it to our selves from other men, is surely great indiscretion: The mischeifs and inconveniences of undue Elections, are I hope made out, the burthen that lies so heavy on Tradesmen most plain; what is wanting to perfect the happiness of the Nation, and the means to arrive at it set down; and all this to be done with much ease and security; If therefore the Considerations of duty cannot move men to stand their own Friends, at least let the dear Argument of self Interest be as prevalent in this, as it usually is upon all other occasions.

FINIS.

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